

Monday, January 29th, 1979

8:27 a.m.

"Go, Go!"

Monika fell to the ground as thick red blood poured out of her body. I stared, as she lay there helpless on the pavement.

Principal Wragg ran towards us, "Go! Go! Go!" He yelled.

I couldn't move; my eyes were locked on Monika's shaking body as the red liquid slowly covered her white blouse. What was happening? Why was this happening?

8:00 a.m.

"Mommy?"

She turned away from the sink and her deep blue eyes moved in towards me.

"Yes, Maggie?"

"What is evil?"

"Honey, why are you asking about that?"

"Well, yesterday when I got to school, someone broke the window. They put little holes in the walls and in our paintings."

"Well Maggie, that wasn't very nice, but I don't think it was evil. Evil is something very, *very* bad." She calmly told me, trying to soothe my worry.

"Can people be evil?"

"Well, I don't think people are evil. Sometimes they can be very confused and do mean things, but people aren't evil."

She always made me feel safe when I was worried, as usual she helped me relax. I watched her as she packed my sandwich into the crinkled brown paper sack. The morning sun shown through the window behind her. Rays of sunshine bounced off of her dark curls and white sundress, making her appear as if she were glowing like an angel in front of our dark wooden cabinets.

My mother was perfect.

"Honey, you better finish your pancakes; Crystal and Matty are gonna be here soon to walk to school. You don't want to make them late now, do you?"

Before I could respond, the doorbell rang. I jumped out of my chair, not thinking twice about my unfinished pancakes, and scrambled to the door.

My mother followed me, handing me the bag while she opened the door.

"Have a good day, darling, I love you."

"I love you, too, Mommy."

I saw Crystal standing there in her pretty new cream and brown colored blouse. Crystal smiled at my mother as Matty ran to the porch and hid behind his sister.

"Good Morning, Mrs. Kelly." Crystal cheerfully said.

"Good morning Crystal," my mother politely responded, "and good morning Matty."

Matty giggled as he poked his head around Crystal's long dark hair.

I walked out the door and said goodbye to my mother.

"Have a nice day at school, kids!"

I walked down the sidewalk with Crystal. Matty wandered through the frost-covered yellow grass, collecting every weed he found for his daily bouquet.

As we continued our journey, we reached the old white school building.

Thinking nothing of it, we walked closer to the school and towards the black gate that Principal Wragg unlocked every morning. I saw Monika, one of my best friends, walking towards the school.

Pop! Pop! Pop!

"What was that?" Crystal asked me.

"Firecrackers!" Matty exclaimed.

"In January?" I asked.

"Maybe they're left over from the New Year," Crystal decided.

"Go, Go!" A deep voice howled.

Screams filled the playground.

In moments, I watched Monika fall to the ground across the schoolyard, only a few feet from the sidewalk. Her hands reached towards her belly as her body quivered in pain. I wanted to run towards her, I wanted to help her, but I felt incased in cement, unable to move. My eyes were glued to my friend lying in pain. "Go! Go! Go!" Principal Wragg screamed once more.

I looked up. I saw the bullet hit his chest, his arms flailing behind him as his body crashed into the bushes. Panic crowded my mind; I wanted to run but I couldn't move. Was he dead? Was Monica dead? Where did Crystal and Matty go? I suddenly realized that I was exhaling a million times a minute, even though my chest felt like a brick wall. Tears soaked my face as I rocked back and forth and back and forth and back and forth.

I tried to take a step, but I stumbled and found my face next to the cement. In a daze, I managed to get up and attempted to move my feet. Ms. Keith, my teacher, seemed to be yelling at me, but I couldn't understand her words.

Mr. Barnes, the 6th grade teacher, was running in and out of school, carrying kids to safety. I saw him pick up Matty. Matty was safe. Matty wasn't going to die.

I wanted to go home, I wanted my mom to hold me in her arms and tell me that everything was fine. Everything was fine. Everything was fine. Everything was fine.

Looking to my left, I finally saw Crystal running towards the school. I watched as she turned for a split second, her hand by her face, and a bullet ripped through her wrist. I felt the speed of my breathing increase again as the shock and increasing panic filled inside of me.

Crystal fell to the ground in pain, her screams could have been heard across the yard as she continued to screech, "Am I gonna die? Am I gonna die? Am I gonna die?"

Was I going to die? Was Crystal going to die? Were we all going to die?

Pop, pop, pop, they just kept coming and coming and coming. I saw Mr. Suchar, our janitor, run towards Principal Wragg. Someone was yelling, "No!" But it was too late. His hand covered his chest, I saw his mouth move, and he fell onto the cement stairs just as the others did. I had to get out, I couldn't die. I saw others huddled against the wall of the school. I felt my legs moving from under me and found myself running towards them. Reaching them, I weaved my way into the tightly formed group residing under a dark window and the awning.

I looked across the street, a khaki-colored house stood with a small window in my view. I spotted the edge of a gun pointing out of the window. With each 'pop' the gun jerked backwards and then set back into place.

They wouldn't stop, I just wanted the bullets to stop. I tried to hide myself from the window, climbing my way into the tight pack. I tried to block out the sounds around me, the crying, the screaming, the yelling. For a moment, I dared to poke my head out again to search for Crystal, but when I couldn't find her my panic started to escalate once again.

A high-pitched sound started to cry in the background of my mind.

"What is that?" A quivering voice asked.

I wanted to know as well, but with the gun still shooting I didn't dare move an inch.

The noise grew closer and closer and the shooting finally stopped.

Someone in the crowd started scream and many cried out, "They're sirens! They're sirens!"

I turned, looking for the policemen.

At first, I saw many men, dressed in big black armor, surrounding the khaki house across the street. I looked for more, for people who would get me out of here; I looked for people who would take me back to my mom.

At the edge of the schoolyard I saw more men dressed in black; they were pointing at us. I prayed that they were planning a way to get me home.

"Come. Follow me."

Shocked, I looked at one of the men in black hovering over our crowd. I couldn't help but cry when I saw his face; he was an angel.

One by one, we began to crawl against the wall, finding our way to our families. Once we passed the building we walked against the black chain link fence, pulling up on the diamonds for stability.

Turning my head away from the fence, I saw big yellow school buses parked at the end of our trail. The police herded us into the buses and they drove us away from the school.

A man stood at the front of the bus and explained that we were going to see our parents. The bus continued to move for what felt like hours as we fidgeted, anxious and desperate to see our families.

As the bus came to a stop, I saw the large crowd of reporters and worried parents. The doors opened and we pushed through the aisles. As soon as I escaped the prison of the bus, I dove into the crowd searching for my mom.

I pushed through the bodies and cameras.

"Maggie!"

I turned towards the voice and saw my mother's dark blue jacket and looked up to see her smile in my direction. She ran towards me, picking me up and holding me. I held her tightly, her clothes smelled like cinnamon. She tried to hide it, but I could hear her lightly crying in my ear. I knew I was safe now.

I saw Crystal, now with a bandaged hand, talking to a reporter with Mrs. Hardy.

I turned around, hearing wheels rolling behind me.

Monika was lying on white sheets with men and women in blue pushing her through the crowd.

"Mommy, is Monika okay?"

She kneeled down, looking into my eyes.

"Monika was shot in her belly. She was hurt badly, but Mr. and Mrs. Selvig [Monika's parents] said she is going to be alright."

"Can we visit her in the hospital, like we did with Grandpa?"

"Of course we can."

A heard a man with a deep voice saying, "Behind us is Monika Selvig, an 8 year-old at Grover Cleveland Elementary in San Diego, California. Monika was one of *eight* children shot today in a massacre by 16 year-old Brenda Spencer. Luckily, they are all injuries at the moment. When we called Brenda, her reason for this shooting was, I quote, 'I don't like Mondays'..."

His voice faded out in my mind as I realized what had really happened.

"Mommy, did a *girl* do all of this?"

She looked down at me, all of the previous brightness in her face now ceased.

"Yes, Maggie. A girl did this."

"She shot all these people?"

"Yes, Maggie."

"Did she kill Principal Wragg and Mr. Suchar?"

She paused before answering this, looking away for a moment and then looking back.

"Yes, Maggie."

“Mommy?”

She looked towards me, kneeling down and gently taking my hand.

“Yes, Maggie?”

I looked up into her eyes.

“I think people can be evil.”